I wrote this op-ed over two years ago; however, both the themes and substance contained in the piece are relevant to the current Canadian political conversation, as we are currently experiencing a surge in anti-Americanism. Hope you enjoy!

The single-payer Canadian healthcare system has come to be seen as one of the defining sources of our national identity, with a 2016 poll showing that more Canadians derived a sense of pride from our healthcare than the Canadian flag, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Canadian passport. This pride is usually justified, however, by invoking comparisons to the American healthcare system. And although the U.S. does indeed have many problems with its healthcare, having this be the exclusive point of comparison used to justify our status quo can become problematic.

Despite the triumphant rhetoric of some, there are many aspects of our healthcare system that are far from ideal, or even acceptable. For example, 61% of Canadians say they are not or not at all confident that they could quickly access emergency care, with 41% of Canadians saying

they've struggled to access any of the main health services provided. Additionally, our supply of hospital beds (2.5 per 1000 inhabitants) lags behind many other wealthy countries, such as Finland, Norway, Iceland, and rather ironically, the United States itself.

As for overall performance, a report by the Commonwealth Fund furtherly and rather poignantly illustrates this point. Here, Canada's healthcare system ranks 10th of out 11 wealthy countries, with the only country ranking behind us being the United States.

These problems with our healthcare system can often be traced back to the complicated matter of overlapping jurisdictions. For example, the federal government has much more control over tax revenues than the individual provinces, which means they need to distribute those funds to the provincial healthcare systems of each province. However, the transfers the federal government has been making to the provinces have often been inadequate.

Besides a lack of funding, another obstacle to the amelioration of Canada's healthcare system is the lack of flexibility in considering

possible changes. As many have noted, the debate surrounding healthcare in Canada is usually limited to the amount of funding that the system receives. While this is in no way an insignificant point, options such as private delivery of healthcare and introducing small premiums as a way to increase funding are often shunned due to their supposed similarities with the private healthcare of the U.S. However, these innovations are in fact used in European countries with robust public healthcare systems.

Canada's healthcare system is grappling with a variety of challenges caused by an even greater multitude of problems. Due to the complex nature of healthcare, the best course of action should not involve a simplistic comparison to a single country designed to engender sanctimonious feelings but rather a reasonable evaluation of the pros and cons. Healthcare is a complex and multifaceted policy issue, and it is time we started treating it as such.